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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Economic Sanctions; Energy Security; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Resource Security; Central Africa; China; East Africa; North Africa

ALGERIA CUTS DIPLOMATIC TIES TO MOROCCO

Relations between North African rivals Algeria and Morocco continue to deteriorate. In late August, the Algerian government suspended diplomatic relations with Morocco, alleging that the Kingdom had used the now-infamous "Pegasus" spyware to track and eavesdrop on Algerian officials, had supported separatists, and had otherwise failed to fulfill its bilateral commitments. "The Moroccan kingdom has never stopped its hostile actions against Algeria," Foreign Minister Ramdane Lamamra publicly charged, defending his government's decision.

While ties between the two countries have been frosty for decades, this marks the first time since 1988 that diplomatic contacts between Rabat and Algiers have been formally cut. The development is not entirely unexpected, however. The bilateral relationship has been particularly strained in recent years because of Algeria's support for the leftist Polisario movement in the Western Sahara, as well as by last year's recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over the territory by the Trump administration, a claim that Algeria contests. (Reuters, August 25, 2021)

THE SUDANS: AN AGENDA FOR GROWTH

Relations between Sudan and South Sudan are beginning to warm, it appears. In one of the most positive developments in relations between the two countries since South Sudan's separation from Sudan in 2011, representatives of both governments have agreed to restart the transport of goods and people by land and water "in the near future." The two countries also agreed "to remove all barriers to banking transactions," as outlined in a joint press release.

Energy contacts are also expanding. Prior to its statehood, the Sudanese territory that is now South Sudan was responsible for a majority of the country's oil production. However, the multi-year civil war that subsequently broke out in South Sudan impacted production and left the overwhelming majority of its reserves untapped. In January, the two states reached an agreement to boost South Sudanese oil production if that crude is piped through Sudan's network of pipelines to the Red Sea. (*Radio Dabanga*, August 23, 2021; *Bloomberg*, January 14, 2021)

CONGO RETHINKS CHINA DEALS

The Congolese government, led by President Felix Tshisekedi, is reviewing a number of contracts with Chinese business partners to see if they provide sufficient benefits to the country. Included among the deals under review is a \$6 billion mining operation managed by China Molybdenum at the Tenke Fungurume copper and cobalt mine. The original plan, negotiated by Tshisekedi's predecessor, Joseph Kabila, granted Chinese state-affiliated businesses SinoHydro and China Railway a 68% stake in the venture if they agreed to build roads and hospitals in the country. However, critics of the arrangement say it has benefitted the Congolese people little since being signed in 2007. (Reuters, August 30, 2021)

ETHIOPIAN REBELS ACCUSED OF WAR CRIMES...

An investigation by Britain's *Telegraph* newspaper has revealed evidence of war crimes by the Tigrayan Defense Forces (TDF), a rebel military faction that has been fighting against the Ethiopian government as part of that country's nine-month long civil war. Witnesses fleeing the conflict accused the TDF of revenge killings and crop destruction in Amhara, one of Ethiopia's northernmost federal states. Estimates of the death toll resulting from these indiscriminate killings (which have been corroborated by the paper's independent investigation) range from "a few dozen" into the hundreds. At the same time, Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, has called upon Ethiopian civilians to take up arms and join the conflict in Amhara as well as in the Afar region, and hundreds of thousands of people face famine. (*Telegraph*, August 17, 2021)

...AS U.S. SANCTIONS ERITREAN MILITARY CHIEF

The U.S. Department of the Treasury has sanctioned the Eritrean military's chief of staff, Filipos Woldeyohannes, over his government's participation in Ethiopia's ongoing civil war. A Treasury statement related to the sanction designation reads in part: "The (Eritrean Defense Forces) have purposely shot civilians in the street and carried out systematic house-to-house searches, executing men and boys, and have forcibly evicted Tigrayan families from their residences and taken over their houses and property." Witnesses and international observers have levelled other human rights abuse allegations against the Eritrean military's operations in Tigray, including gang-rapes, intentional destruction of crops and health centers, and forced expulsions. (*NPR*, August 23, 2021)